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Gay leader explains problems facing homosexuals

Morty Manford, President of the Gay Activist Alliance, was on campus this week speaking on homosexuality before various groups. His opinions are presented in the following interview conducted by a Campus reporter.

"We are proud! We have our rights!"

Morty Manford, President of the Gay Activists Alliance, emphasized these points as he spoke to The Maine Campus. Manford has been on campus this week explaining the gay experience to those who will listen.

"There is an enormous ignorance. I'm here trying to help the Wilde-Stein Club (WS-C) break down the enormous walls erected against the homosexual. The WS-C is trying to create an environment that will be comfortable with homosexuality."

Manford has been speaking with clubs, gay groups in the area. Residential Life personnel on campus, and classes on both the Bangor and Orono campuses explaining the gay feeling to people who may not have been exposed to it before. He was appalled at the "slandering remarks" appearing in letter columns of local papers and on the electronic media. He described as "irresponsible journalism" the one sided approach presented by some members of the press. He pointed to stories about gays, or editorials written about gays which adopted only an antagonistic viewpoint.

The controversy that is just reaching Maine is not new, says Manford. "The first Gay college organization was started at Columbia University in 1967. There are groups all over the country, in conservative, liberal, radical, rich and poor areas. I am aware of gay groups in Hancock County, Bangor, Portland, and Orono. All of Maine's gays are not at UMO."

The gay activist leader described the WS-C's effort at UMO as a "positive example for gays around the state. The club is setting an emotional example to others in Maine who have remained in hiding for fear of losing their friends, jobs, and community respect," he added.

Manford said homosexuals in America are discriminated against by a society which is sexually sick. "Heterosexual involvement has always been tolerated because it had some future event to look to: either the procreation of a future world leader or a great sports figure," he termed this as rationalizing sexuality for pleasure. "We have the right to enjoy ourselves," was Manford's answer to this standard moralistic approach to human relations.

A man and woman enjoy each other's company in bed with the blessings of the country while two persons of the same sex are being deviant because there is no future event to look forward to. He added: "Homosexuality is a relationship between two people who love each other now, not because of some future occurrence, but rather because of their feeling for each other." The gay liberationist emphasized Americans must be educated to adopt a more humanistic approach towards each other; sexuality is for the expression of love for a person no matter what the person's sex—male or female.

America's reaction to the gay movement comes from fear for the destruction of the male power structure, he continued. "Homosexuality presents an alternate lifestyle to people who have always been taught another. A male who questions his masculinity in this society is a sick man. That feeling must be changed."

When asked about society's apparent tolerance of female homosexuality, Manford said "They (lesbians) are not as much of a threat to the male power establishment. A woman who is not displaying her required role in society is just ignored. An effeminate man is sick. That kind of thinking is sexist as well as absurd."

The controversy that surrounds homosexuality can be explained in two parts, said the gay activist leader. "There is a fear of changing a person's sexuality—conversion, and there is homophobia, the irrational reaction to and fear of homosexuals. There is no proof that a person's sexuality can be changed either by a doctor or by someone else. Homophobia is rampant in this country. When a person is confronted by someone of the opposite sex for intimate relations no one is upset; it's acceptable. When someone of the same sex approaches you, if it's not for you, why can't you say 'no thank you'?"